



## MANCHESTER HEALTH DEPARTMENT MONTHLY REPORT SUMMARY, NOVEMBER 2006

### Public Health Preparedness Program

#### **PROGRAM LISTING:**

**Arbovirus  
Surveillance &  
Control**

**Chronic Disease  
Prevention**

**Communicable  
Disease Control**

**Community  
Epidemiology**

**Dental Health**

**Environmental  
Planning and  
Pollution Control**

**Food Protection**

**HIV Prevention**

**Homeless Health  
Care Project**

**Immunizations**

**Institutional  
Inspections**

**Lead Poisoning  
Prevention**

**Public Health  
Investigations**

**Public Health  
Preparedness**

**Refugee Health**

**School Health**

**Sexually  
Transmitted  
Disease Control**

**Tuberculosis  
Control**

**Water Quality**

**Youth Health  
Promotion**

**Summary of Program:** September 11, 2001 is a date no one will ever forget. The attacks on America on this day, and the subsequent anthrax attacks in October 2001, brought to light the need to improve our country's public health infrastructure. While most people think of this time as the turning point for public health preparedness, work in this area had already begun. In 1998, the Senate Subcommittee on Public Health recognized the need to increase public health capacity in the United States. This led to the "Public Health Threats and Emergencies Act of 2000," which was co-sponsored by Senators Frist and Kennedy. The purpose of this piece of legislation and subsequent allocations was to "upgrade state and local public health jurisdiction's preparedness for and response to bioterrorism, other outbreaks of infectious disease, and other public health threats and emergencies." For the past five years, public health preparedness funding has played a pivotal role in improving our community's capability to protect the public health of its citizens.

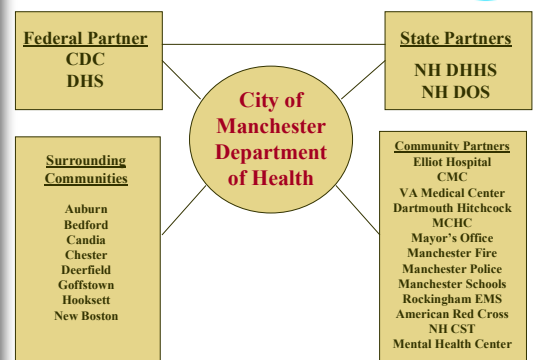
The key to the success of the Manchester's public health preparedness program has been partnerships. When it comes to preparing a community, or a region, to respond to a public health threat, no one organization can do it alone. In Manchester, we are fortunate to have established relationships between our first responders, hospitals and health care providers, neighboring towns, and City, State and federal partners. This collaborative effort has enabled us to enhance our community surveillance for rapid detection of unusual outbreaks of illness, and has improved our capacity to respond to these outbreaks. It has improved our communication capabilities and facilitated coordination with our neighboring communities. It has also enabled us to develop plans and exercise these plans, all in an effort to assure that our community is as prepared as it can be to respond to an emergency, whether naturally occurring or the result of an act of terrorism.

#### **Summary of Activities:**

- Improved Manchester Health Department's ability to respond 24/7
- Developed and exercised mass vaccination plans
- Developed and exercised SARS and Pandemic Influenza response plans
- Developed and exercised chemical decontamination plans
- Implemented a school based disease surveillance system (STEMS)
- Improved linkages to the medical community
- Trained over 200 public health practitioners from around the State at the New Hampshire Institute for Local Public Health Practice at the Manchester Health Department (ILPHP)

**Program Notes and Trends:** Public health preparedness is a new and expanded dimension of public health that has become a critical component of all local public health departments. As we move forward, we will continue to use technology to facilitate services and communicate with our partners. Through the ILPHP, we will work to assure a competent public health work force in New Hampshire. By developing competencies we as a State can then address credentialing and certification of local public health departments, a key component to improving our public health infrastructure. We will continue to work with our partners to draft, revise and exercise emergency response plans, always striving to assure that our community is prepared for any public health emergency that we may face.

### Public Health Preparedness in Manchester: Partnerships



## Community Activities

**Safe Food Handling Seminar:** On October 31, 2006, the Division of Environmental Health held its semi-annual Safe Food Handling Seminar. Two hundred and fifty (250) people from over 125 of Manchester's food service establishments were in attendance. Through a series of discussions and demonstrations, attendees were provided information on the steps needed to prevent a foodborne illness in their restaurant. The next seminar will be held in April, but Environmental Health Specialists are always available to do on-site training of food service workers.

## A Note from the Outgoing Public Health Director

On November 30<sup>th</sup>, I'll be retiring after more than 33 years with the Department, including 20 years as its director. There were many "*highlights*" in Manchester public health through these years, with just a few mentioned below.



In the 1970's, better regulation of food establishments and on-site sewage disposal systems were key issues that the Department addressed. Lead poisoning in children became widely recognized as the most significant environmental issue that Manchester children face and Manchester became the first community to work with the legislature to address this problem. In 1976, the Department earned an article in the Wall Street Journal after it hosted one of the first swine flu clinics in the country.

The 1980's saw the emergence of new communicable diseases, such as AIDS, and the reemergence of old threats such as tuberculosis. At times, tuberculosis resurfaced in a new, more deadly multi-drug resistant strain. The emergence of new food borne diseases such as *E. coli* 0157 reminded us that public health needed to maintain its vigilance over the safety of foods. With the consolidation of smaller schools into larger schools with higher enrollments, the Department recognized the importance of school health services to children's health and restructured its services to develop a separate division for school health. Over the ensuing twenty years, the school health staff doubled from about 15 FTE to nearly 30 FTE school health services staff. Each of Manchester's public schools has at least a school nurse present every school day, with two full time float nurses available to help out in any school when the workload warrants it.

The relationship between chronic diseases and American lifestyles became widely recognized in the 1990's as the most significant challenge that public health agencies needed to address in order to continue the century long improvement in the health and longevity of American families. This work involved a community response, rather than a department response, so the Department formed the Healthy Manchester Leadership Council. The Healthy Manchester Leadership Council is comprised of key healthcare, human service agency heads and others with the express purpose of working together to find community solutions to broad public health issues. This council's work led to a 30 % reduction in births to adolescents, the fluoridation of the City water supply, and the development of several collaborative community health strategies to address pressing public health concerns.

The turn of the century saw the emergence of new public health problems: bioterrorism, anthrax scares, smallpox readiness, SARS, flu pandemic fears, and the concern about the growing number of uninsured who don't have full access to health care services. In 2002, the Health Department was forced from its home at 795 Elm Street by a devastating fire. Over the next couple of years, the Department transitioned to the wonderful office that it currently occupies at 1528 Elm Street. This office space has been designed and created for use as a health department, so it is efficient and comfortable for both the public and employees alike.

The most rewarding aspect of having spent a career in public health in Manchester has been the wonderful Department staff and community partners whom I have worked with. Their commitment to the well-being of our community is truly exemplary. Manchester is in good public health hands!



### FOR MORE INFORMATION

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